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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	DEAE-00	DODE-00	DS-00	HA-09
	H-01	INM-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIG-01	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01
	SCT-03	SNP-01	SP-01	SS-01	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7749

INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 00701

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PBTS, PTER, SNAR, MOPS, PINS, CO, VE

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF DEFENSE OCHOA ANTICH COMMENTS ON
MILITARY-RELATED MATTERS

1. (C) SUMMARY: MINISTER OF DEFENSE OCHOA ANTICH COMMENTED IN A RECENT SPEECH ABOUT SEVERAL MILITARY-RELATED MATTERS: THE WELFARE OF HIS MEN, THE ROLE OF THE ARMY VIS-A-VIS THAT OF THE NATIONAL GUARD, THE POSSIBILITY OF A COUP D'ETAT ("NO!"), AND THE DISBANDING OF A SPECIAL MILITARY UNIT IN THE APURE AREA BORDERING ON COLOMBIA. END SUMMARY.

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DEFENSE MINISTER URGES APPROVAL OF ARMED FORCES' SOCIAL WELFARE PLAN,...

2. (U) MINISTER OF DEFENSE FERNANDO OCHOA ANTICH IN AN ADDRESS TO STUDENTS AT THE INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE (IAEDEN) LAST MONTH STATED THAT ONE OF HIS PRIORITIES IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PLAN OF SOCIAL WELFARE FOR THE ARMED FORCES TO ENSURE RETENTION OF OFFICERS AND TO ADDRESS THE DISSATISFACTION CAUSED BY LOW SALARIES. "IF WE DO NOT MANAGE TO FORMULATE A PLAN OF SOCIAL WELFARE, THE MOST TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF THE ARMED

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
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FORCES WILL LEAVE, GENERATING IN CONSEQUENCE A WEAKENING OF THEIR STRUCTURE." (OFFICIALS OF GOVERNING AD ALSO REPORTEDLY RAISED THIS PROBLEM WITH CAP DURING A DECEMBER 4, 1991, MEETING. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE MILITARY CURRENTLY IS DRAFTING SUCH A WELFARE PLAN FOR SUBMISSION TO CAP.)

THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IN SUPPRESSING DOMESTIC DISTURBANCES,...

3. (LOU) IN A VEILED REFERENCE TO RECENT PUBLIC PROTESTS, OCHOA ANTICH REJECTED USE OF THE ARMY TO QUELL DOMESTIC UNREST ABSENT A DECREE OF STATE OF EMERGENCY. RATHER, HE SAID, THE NATIONAL GUARD, A "STRUCTURALLY IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE STATE," SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED SO AS TO BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH DOMESTIC UNREST.

THE POSSIBILITY OF A COUP D'ETAT,...

4. (U) OCHOA ANTICH REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT THE ARMED
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FORCES REJECTED A COUP D'ETAT FOR BOTH ETHICAL AND PRACTICAL REASONS. IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, HE NOTED, "WE HAVE A CLEAR CONCEPT OF WHAT LOYALTY TO REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS MEANS." IN THE SECOND, "WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MILITARY INTERVENTION IS THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE; ON THE CONTRARY, IT WOULD AGGRAVATE THEM, BECAUSE THE (NEW) POLITICAL REGIME WOULD LOSE LEGITIMACY."

AND THE DISBANDING OF MILITARY WORKING GROUP L.I.

5. (U) IN THE SAME ADDRESS, OCHOA ANTICH ANNOUNCED THAT ARMED FORCES WORKING GROUP 1.1, FORMED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO TO COMBAT CRIME AND INSURGENCY IN APURE STATE BORDERING ON COLOMBIA, WOULD BE DISBANDED DURING DECEMBER, 1991. HE EXPLAINED THAT, THE CAUSE OF ITS FORMATION HAVING BEEN ADDRESSED, THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY NEED FOR ARMY UNITS THERE TO HELP THE NATIONAL GUARD EXECUTE ITS MISSION OF FRONTIER SECURITY. THE ARMY, IN TURN, COULD RETURN TO ITS MISSION, GUARDING AGAINST FOREIGN DANGERS TO THE COUNTRY. IN JUSTIFICATION OF THIS DECISION, OCHOA CITED A PURPORTED DECLINE IN KIDNAPPINGS IN APURE STATE FROM 27 DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 1991 TO ONLY 1 SO FAR IN ITS SECOND HALF. HE ALSO PLEDGED SIGNIFICANTLY TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR FRONTIER POSTS.

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COMMENT

6. (C) THIS SPEECH IS A GOOD INSTANCE OF OCHOA ANTICH'S TENACIOUS DEFENSE OF WHAT HE PERCEIVES AS TRADITIONAL ARMED FORCES (ESPECIALLY ARMY) PREROGATIVES, INCLUDING THEIR MATERIAL WELFARE AND NARROWLY DEFINED MISSION. THE

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ARMY HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN RELUCTANT TO SHARE OSTENSIBLE NATIONAL GUARD RESPONSIBILITIES. IN THE CASE OF FRONTIER SECURITY, TRADITIONALLY CONSIDERED A GUARD RESPONSIBILITY, THE OUTFALL FROM THE "EL AMPARO" INCIDENT OF 1988, IN WHICH THE GUARD ALLEGEDLY KILLED A NUMBER OF INNOCENT FISHERMEN, MAKES THE ARMED FORCES EVEN MORE RELUCTANT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE APURE AREA OF SOUTHWESTERN VENEZUELA BORDERING ON COLOMBIA. IF INCIDENTS OF SUBVERSION INCREASE FOLLOWING GROUP 1.1'S DISBANDING, HOWEVER, IT COULD EASILY BE RESTORED. SKOL

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